AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Previously presented) A method comprising:

coupling a plurality of bridge modules to form a logical network layer between one or more network elements providing billable services and one or more charging elements;

receiving charging events at the bridge modules, wherein the charging events record details of the billable services; and

managing charging transactions at ~~the~~ a network between the network elements and their respective charging elements via the bridge modules through the application of rules to the charging transaction initiated by corresponding charging events, wherein each of the bridge modules is configured with a subset of the rules assigned to the services managed by that bridge module, and one of the bridge modules is designated as a primary bridge module to receive the rules and distribute the subsets of rules to the remaining bridge modules.

2. (Original) The method as in Claim 1, further comprising generating and transmitting the charging events by the network elements providing the billable services, wherein the charging events comprise service use parameters used by the charging elements.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously presented) The method as in Claim 1, further comprising:

implementing an application programming interface (API) at each of the network elements providing billable services to interface each of the respective network elements to the one or more bridge modules; and

generating and transmitting the charging events by the network elements providing the billable services, wherein transmitting the charging events comprises transmitting XML-formatted charging events pursuant to the API.

5. (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein receiving charging events comprises intercepting the charging events dispatched by the network elements to the charging elements.

6. (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein managing charging transactions comprises applying the rules to transform the charging events to a format recognizable by targeted charging elements.

7. (Original) The method as in Claim 6, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises converting the charging events from a first format to a second format.

8. (Original) The method as in Claim 6, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises filtering the charging events to prevent transmission of particular ones of the charging events to the charging elements.

9. (Original) The method as in Claim 6, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises recalculating fields of the charging events to present the fields in units utilized in the charging elements.

10. (Original) The method as in Claim 6, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises routing the charging events to multiple destinations.

11. (Original) The method as in Claim 6, further comprising transmitting the transformed charging events via interface objects corresponding to respective charging elements.

12. (Original) The method as in Claim 11, further comprising directing the transformed charging events to the interface objects corresponding to targeted charging elements based on the rules and the transformed charging events.

13. (Original) The method as in Claim 12, wherein directing the transformed charging events further comprises applying the rules to the transformed charging events to identify addresses of the interface objects corresponding to the targeted charging elements.

14. (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein managing charging transactions comprises selecting an interface object for communicating with a corresponding charging element, wherein selecting an interface object comprises identifying one of a plurality of the interface objects as determined by object configuration rules.

15. (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein managing charging transactions comprises performing a plurality of transaction operations with a plurality of the charging elements in a sequence dictated by the rules.

16. (Original) The method as in Claim 15, wherein performing a plurality of transaction operations with a plurality of the charging elements comprises applying the rules to responsive messages from at least one of the charging elements to perform one or more of the transaction operations.

17. (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein managing charging transactions comprises coordinating one or more communications with the charging elements to carry out the charging transaction.

18. (Original) The method as in Claim 17, wherein coordinating the communications with the charging elements comprises transmitting a first call to a first charging element in response to applying the rules to the charging transaction initiated by the corresponding charging event.

19. (Original) The method as in Claim 18, wherein coordinating the communications with the charging elements further comprises receiving a response to the first call from the first charging element, and transmitting a second call to a second charging element in response to applying the rules to the response to the first call.

20-23 (Cancelled)

24. (Previously presented) The method as in Claim 1, further comprising entering the rules at a console coupled to the primary bridge module.

25-61. (Canceled)

62. (New) An apparatus, comprising:

a processor configured with executable instructions that cause the apparatus to:

couple one or more bridge modules to form a logical network layer between one or more network elements providing billable services and one or more charging elements;

receive charging events at the one or more bridge modules, wherein the charging events record details of the billable services; and

manage charging transactions at the network between the network elements and their respective charging elements via the one or more bridge modules through the application of rules to the charging transaction initiated by corresponding charging events, wherein managing the charging transactions comprises applying the rules to transform the charging events to a format recognizable by targeted charging elements.

63. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 62, wherein the executable instructions further cause the apparatus to generate and transmit the charging events by the network elements providing the billable services, wherein the charging events comprise service use parameters used by the charging elements.

64. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 62, wherein the executable instructions further cause the apparatus to:

implement an application programming interface (API) at each of the network elements providing billable services to interface each of the respective network elements to the one or more bridge modules; and

generate and transmit the charging events by the network elements providing the billable services, wherein transmitting the charging events comprises transmitting XML-formatted charging events pursuant to the API.

65. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 62, wherein receiving charging events comprises intercepting the charging events dispatched by the network elements to the charging elements.

66. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 62, wherein managing charging transactions comprises applying the rules to transform the charging events to a format recognizable by targeted charging elements.

67. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 66, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises converting the charging events from a first format to a second format.

68. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 66, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises filtering the charging events to prevent transmission of particular ones of the charging events to the charging elements.

69. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 66, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises recalculating fields of the charging events to present the fields in units utilized in the charging elements.

70. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 66, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises routing the charging events to multiple destinations.

71. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 66, wherein the executable instructions further cause the apparatus to transmit the transformed charging events via interface objects corresponding to respective charging elements.

72. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 71, wherein the executable instructions further cause the apparatus to direct the transformed charging events to the interface objects corresponding to targeted charging elements based on the rules and the transformed charging events.

73. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 72, wherein directing the transformed charging events further comprises applying the rules to the transformed charging events to identify addresses of the interface objects corresponding to the targeted charging elements.

74. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 62, wherein managing charging transactions comprises selecting an interface object for communicating with a corresponding charging element, wherein selecting an interface object comprises identifying one of a plurality of the interface objects as determined by object configuration rules.

75. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 62, wherein managing charging transactions comprises performing a plurality of transaction operations with a plurality of the charging elements in a sequence dictated by the rules.

76. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 75, wherein performing a plurality of transaction operations with a plurality of the charging elements comprises applying the rules to responsive messages from at least one of the charging elements to perform one or more of the transaction operations.

77. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 62, wherein managing charging transactions comprises coordinating one or more communications with the charging elements to carry out the charging transaction.

78. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 77, wherein coordinating the communications with the charging elements comprises transmitting a first call to a first charging element in response to applying the rules to the charging transaction initiated by the corresponding charging event.

79. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 78, wherein coordinating the communications with the charging elements further comprises receiving a response to the first call from the first charging element, and transmitting a second call to a second charging element in response to applying the rules to the response to the first call.

80. (New) The apparatus as in Claim 62, wherein the executable instructions further cause the apparatus to receive the rules at a console coupled to the primary bridge module.

85. A computer-readable storage medium encoded with instructions that, when executed by an apparatus, perform:

coupling a plurality of bridge modules to form a logical network layer between one or more network elements providing billable services and one or more charging elements;

receiving charging events at the bridge modules, wherein the charging events record details of the billable services; and

managing charging transactions at a network between the network elements and their respective charging elements via the bridge modules through the application of rules to the charging transaction initiated by corresponding charging events, wherein each of the bridge modules is configured with a subset of the rules assigned to the services managed by that bridge module, and one of the bridge modules is designated as a primary bridge module to receive the rules and distribute the subsets of rules to the remaining bridge modules.

86. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 85, wherein the executable instructions further cause the apparatus to generate and transmit the charging events by the network elements providing the billable services, wherein the charging events comprise service use parameters used by the charging elements.

87. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 85, wherein the executable instructions further cause the apparatus to:

implement an application programming interface (API) at each of the network elements providing billable services to interface each of the respective network elements to the one or more bridge modules; and

generate and transmit the charging events by the network elements providing the billable services, wherein transmitting the charging events comprises transmitting XML-formatted charging events pursuant to the API.

88. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 85, wherein receiving charging events comprises intercepting the charging events dispatched by the network elements to the charging elements.

89. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 85, wherein managing charging transactions comprises applying the rules to transform the charging events to a format recognizable by targeted charging elements.

90. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 89, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises converting the charging events from a first format to a second format.

91. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 89, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises filtering the charging events to prevent transmission of particular ones of the charging events to the charging elements.

92. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 89, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises recalculating fields of the charging events to present the fields in units utilized in the charging elements.

93. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 89, wherein applying the rules to transform the charging events comprises routing the charging events to multiple destinations.

94. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 89, wherein the executable instructions further cause the apparatus to transmit the transformed charging events via interface objects corresponding to respective charging elements.

95. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 94, wherein the executable instructions further cause the apparatus to direct the transformed charging events to the interface objects corresponding to targeted charging elements based on the rules and the transformed charging events.

96. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 95, wherein directing the transformed charging events further comprises applying the rules to the transformed charging events to identify addresses of the interface objects corresponding to the targeted charging elements.

97. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 85, wherein managing charging transactions comprises selecting an interface object for communicating with a corresponding charging element, wherein selecting an interface object comprises identifying one of a plurality of the interface objects as determined by object configuration rules.

98. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 85, wherein managing charging transactions comprises performing a plurality of transaction operations with a plurality of the charging elements in a sequence dictated by the rules.

99. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 98, wherein performing a plurality of transaction operations with a plurality of the charging elements comprises applying the rules to responsive messages from at least one of the charging elements to perform one or more of the transaction operations.

100. (New) The computer-readable storage medium as in Claim 85, wherein managing charging transactions comprises coordinating one or more communications with the charging elements to carry out the charging transaction.